

ENGLISH 400: ADVANCED POETRY WORKSHOP

Spring Semester 2013

Tu/Th 12:30–1:45 PM, Palmer 211

CRN: 23296

Dr. Caki Wilkinson

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Office: Palmer 304

Office hours: M/T/W 11:00 AM – noon, and by appt.

TEXTS

Hayes, Terrance. *Lighthouse*. New York: Penguin, 2010.

Queneau, Ramon. *Exercises in Style*. Trans. Barbara Wright. 2nd ed. New York: New Directions, 1981.

Ramazani, Jahan, Richard Ellmann, and Robert O'Clair, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Intended for writing majors focusing on poetry, this course builds on the material from Introduction to Poetry Writing and the Intermediate Poetry Workshop. Now that you are familiar with the basic elements of poetry and poetic form, we will extend our focus to explore some of the traditions and conventions that inform contemporary poetics. The course will follow a two-part structure. Roughly half of our time will be spent in critiquing your poems in workshop. We will use the other half of our time to discuss essays on poetry and aesthetics, reading these alongside a diverse selection of work by contemporary poets. The essays will cover a lot of territory—from the Classical period to the mid-20th century—but all are concerned with the big questions: What is poetry? What is a poet, and what is her role in society? How can we identify a “good” poem? By the end of the semester you will have a clearer sense of how these questions figure into your own work, and you will have produced a substantial portfolio of poems.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Poems and final portfolio.** Over the course of the semester you will write six poems, all of which will be discussed in workshop. At the end of the term you will submit a portfolio that includes the original drafts of these six poems (with my comments) and five revisions. Additionally, your portfolio will include an introduction (2-3 pages) that addresses the poems as a whole, describing your writing process, stylistic choices, and strategies for revision.
- **Writing exercises.** You will complete six writing exercises, each responding to some aspect of the week's reading. These exercises will push you to experiment with different styles and filters, and they may serve as a springboard for later poems.

- **Report.** Once during the semester you will present a short report (10 minutes) on a recent book by a contemporary poet. To prepare, you will read the book and make copies of 3-5 poems that demonstrate the poet's style and the book's central themes.
- **April project.** April is National Poetry Month. Working in groups of two or three, you will develop a project that aims to promote poetry on campus. For ideas, we will look at some recent large-scale projects such as Poetry In Motion, the Favorite Poem Project, Poetry Out Loud, and Motionpoems.

Workshop

I have divided you into two groups, and we will workshop your poems nearly every week. The Tuesday before your group is up for workshop, you will bring seven copies of your poem to distribute to the class. Prior to workshop, members of the class will read the poems in that week's group and write a critique of each poem in the form of a letter addressed to the author. You are required to email me all of your letters, copied and pasted in the body of the email, by 8AM on the day of workshop. Additionally, you will print out copies of these letters and distribute them to their respective authors at the end of the workshop. Each letter should be typed and roughly half of a double-spaced page in length. The focus of your critique will change depending on the week's assignment, and we will talk more about these procedures during the first weeks of the semester.

Participation

Active participation is an essential component of this course. A workshop cannot succeed unless everyone in the class attends and participates. Even if you are the quiet type, you will be expected to contribute to class discussions and to critique the work of your peers with diligence and respect. If you come to class without the required materials (poems for workshop, handouts, books, and so forth), you will be marked as absent for the day.

Additionally, I may give quizzes. We will read a lot of poems each week, and we may not be able to discuss them all in class. Quizzes will help me keep track of your progress. These will be short (3-4 questions), and if you have done the reading you should not have trouble passing them.

Finally, you are required to attend at least one reading during the semester. I will provide more information about dates and times as it becomes available.

POLICIES

Assignments

All work must be typed, and assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. Late work will receive a 0 unless you have made arrangements with me

beforehand; the same goes for work sent through email. In the case of poems submitted for workshop, no exceptions will be made for lateness.

Attendance

You are allowed three excused absences but no unexcused absences. An absence is only excused if you have contacted me before class to explain the circumstances. For each unexcused absence, your final grade will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter grade. After three excused absences, your final grade will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter grade as well. If you miss more than six workshops, you will fail the course.

Grading

Final Portfolio	30%
Poems	30%
Writing exercises	15%
Participation (includes attendance, quizzes and workshop comments)	15%
Report and April project	10%

I will assign midterm grades to give you a sense of where you stand, and you are always welcome—and encouraged—to discuss your progress with me.

Academic Honesty

All work in this course should be original and individual, unless I have made a group assignment. Evidence of collusion (someone helped you write the assignment), plagiarism (using someone else's published or unpublished words without acknowledgement), or multiple submissions (handing in the same work to different classes) will not be tolerated. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the Honor Code.